

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**  
**PUBLIC DEFENDER COMMISSION MEETING February 6, 2024**

In person meeting at OCPD Hartford

**Meeting commenced at 4:38 pm**

Members Present

Hon Richard Palmer (Chair)  
Herman Woodard  
Attorney Michael Jefferson (arrived at 5:10 pm)  
Hon Shelia Pratts  
Russell Morin  
Hon Elliot Solomon

Other Agency Staff

TaShun Bowden Lewis, Chief Public Defender  
John Day, Deputy Chief Public Defender  
Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Director, Legal Counsel  
Paula Lohr, Acting Director of Human Resources

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> – Majority to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2023, Commission Meeting to include a copy of Commission Policy 205 of the Administrative Manual as approved by the Commission at the January 9, 2024, Commission Meeting. Judge Solomon abstained.

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> – Unanimous to approve the use of Innocence Project bequest funds for travel for two exonerees and a spouse/partner to attend the annual Innocence Network Conference in late March.

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> – Unanimous to approve the payment of invoices in the amount of \$13,728 to the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin.

Presentation by Andrew O’Shea, Director of Training, regarding the proposed annual meeting of the Public Defender’s office. He reported the results of the survey his office conducted and proposed hosting a half-day “zoom” style meeting during the work week and hosting, in addition, a weekend staff appreciation program.

Q&A by Commission members with Attorney O’Shea and CPD TaShun Bowden-Lewis followed regarding the anticipated costs of both programs and the utility of having a training-based program versus appreciation-based program. Commission members raised concerns regarding the use of taxpayer funds for what is viewed as a social gathering held on a weekend. Commission members expressed an unwillingness to support a weekend program.

Discussion by Commission members regarding future presentations by Thought Partners Solutions, YWCA Greenwich Center for Equity and Justice, and Logan Consulting & Therapeutic Services to be heard at the March or April Commission meeting.

Discussion by Commission members regarding the affirmation of Administrative Manual section #205 (attached) as approved at the January 9, 2024, Commission Meeting. A review by the members may take place at a future meeting to be determined.

Two items of Commission correspondence were received regarding personnel and will be discussed during Executive Session.

The Commission offered a time of public comment. No public comments were made.

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> Unanimous to go into Executive Session at 5:33 pm

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> Unanimous to come out of Executive Session at 8:15 pm

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> Unanimous to approve the following Authorizations to Incur Expenses:

- 0206001
- 0206002
- 0206003

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> Unanimous to approve the following reappointments and permanent status:

- Briana Paramhance                      PT-PD Secretary 1 GA #15
- Irene Tucker                              Investigator 1 GA #4
- Stephanie O'Neil                            GA # 18
- Mark Holmes                                GA #12
- Michelle Fredericks                        GA #14
- Caroline Gallucci                         GA #2
- Kim Mendola                                GA #2

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> Unanimous to approve the following outside employment request:

- Sean Travis Scott

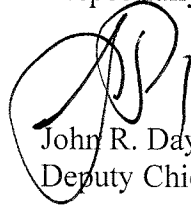
MM 2<sup>nd</sup> by Majority to deny the request for funding to hold an annual event at the Holiday Hill. Attorney Michael Jefferson and Judge Prats abstained.

Attorney Michael Jefferson requested that vacant positions be posted promptly.

Justice Palmer asked that the Commission be provided with any HR related policies that are currently being used in addition to the hiring policy that, as noted previously, has been confirmed by the Commission to be Policy #205.

MM 2<sup>nd</sup> Unanimous to adjourn at 8:23 pm

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. R. Day', written over the printed name.

John R. Day  
Deputy Chief Public Defender



Office of Chief Public Defender  
**Administrative Policy and Procedures Manual**  
*"The Leading Force for Equal Justice"*

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**RECRUITMENT /HIRING /ADVANCEMENT**

**POLICY**

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The policy-making body and appointing authority for all personnel of the Division of Public Defender Services is the Public Defender Services Commission, established by Section 51-289 of the general Statutes.

The Division of Public Defender Services recruits, hires and promotes only the best qualified candidates for positions utilizing Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employment practices.

All appointments of personnel must be made by the Commission before the appointee's employment begins, unless the Chief Public Defender makes the appointment, subject to ratification by a subsequent vote of the Commission.

When a vacancy occurs in the Division, the Chief Public Defender will decide whether it will be filled, with workload and budgetary considerations as the principal determinants.

Notice of all open permanent positions that are to be filled will be communicated by e-mail to all Division employees and will also be posted on the Division's website and in all offices. Bargaining unit posting requirements will be adhered to as appropriate.

Advertising outside the Division will likewise not be required if a vacant position is to be filled by the promotion or transfer of an incumbent who occupies a permanent position within the Division, provided notice of opportunity for such promotion or transfer is given to all eligible incumbents occupying permanent positions in the Division.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

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The Division of Public Defender Services complies with all federal and state laws pertaining to equal opportunity recruitment in state government.

The Chief Public Defender is responsible for ensuring fair and equal employment practices within the Division. The Chief Public Defender and the Director of Human Resources/Affirmative Action Officer will work closely with members of supervision involved in the hiring process to ensure compliance with Equal Employment/Affirmative Action policies.

Once authorization has been granted to act on a position, the Human Resources Unit in the Office of Chief Public Defender will initiate the job posting/advertising process, including

notices to all offices and union notification as appropriate. Job specifications are reviewed to ensure that only truly job-related criteria are listed as prerequisites for the respective position.

**As a general rule, resumes and job applications will be directed for review and selection for interview as follows:**

- Public Defender and Supervisory Assistant Public Defender positions will be directed to the Chief Public Defender, and the Director, Human Resources;
- All non-supervisory attorney positions will be directed to the Chief Public Defender or Deputy Chief Public Defender and/or the Office or Unit head as determined by the Chief Public Defender, and the Director, Human Resources;
- All social worker, investigator and other office support staff positions will be directed to the office or unit head and the Director, Human Resources, unless otherwise determined by the Chief Public Defender.

Current, permanent employees in the Division will be required to submit an updated resume when applying for a position. Permanent attorneys in the Division will be required to complete and submit an updated "Attorney Questionnaire" in addition to their resume when applying for a position.

External applicants may submit a resume and will also be required to submit an Employment Application and Attorney Questionnaire as appropriate.

**The process for selecting and interviewing candidates will be as follows:**

Candidates will be selected for interview based on how closely their credentials, set forth in their resume, questionnaire and/or application match the requirements for the position. Those involved in the process will be required to be very specific in their view of the requirements of the position which:

- Must be consistent with the minimum qualifications of the job;
- Must be clearly related to the essential functions of the job and;
- Must not result in unlawful employment discrimination.

**Screening of Applications and Resumes:**

- The Chief Public Defender will determine the applicants who will be interviewed for Public Defender or Supervisory Assistant Public Defender positions.
- For all other positions, applicants will be screened and selected for interview by the Office or Unit Head, after consultation with the appropriate person at the Office of Chief Public Defender (Review of attorney and exempt applicants will involve the Chief Public Defender or their designee; review of Social Worker and Investigator positions will

involve the Chief Social Worker and Chief Investigator, respectively; other support positions will involve the Director of Human Resources or their designee).

- As a general rule, no less than the top five (5) qualifying candidates for any open position will be invited for an interview.

#### **Interviews:**

- Office of Chief Public Defender personnel (as noted above) may sit in on the first round of interviews to assist in evaluating candidates. As a general rule, a minimum of three (3) finalist candidates for positions other than secretary or clerk positions will be interviewed by the Chief and Deputy Chief Public Defender or their designee, if they have not been involved in the first round of interviews.

The interview process for all positions must be conducted in a way that assures only information related to the applicant's qualifications to perform the duties of the job is obtained, and information that could serve as the basis for illegal discrimination is not obtained. Under no circumstances may questions be asked concerning race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status or learning disability. If a candidate raises any of these topics, it should be clearly stated that such information is not relevant.

Interviews and interview questions should be structured in such a way as to ascertain information from candidates fairly and impartially. Judgments concerning each candidate interviewed should be made on the basis of the same criteria by each interviewer for each individual interviewed.

The hiring supervisor will be responsible for completing the Applicant Tracking/Affirmative Action form and submitting it to the Human Resources Unit in the Office of Chief Public Defender. Resumes of all applicants and the Applicant Tracking form will be retained for a period of two (2) years following an appointment by the Commission.

#### **The final selection, appointment/ratification and notification process:**

Final selection and appointment for Public Defender, Supervisory Assistant Public Defender, attorney, exempt and non entry-level bargaining unit positions are made at the respective Commission meeting by vote of the Commission.

- In the case of Public Defender and Supervisory Assistant Public Defender positions, the Chief Public Defender will confer with the Chairman of the Public Defender Services Commission regarding the selection of candidates to be interviewed by the Commission.
- In the case of attorney and other non-entry level support positions, the Office Head, along with the Chief Social Worker or Chief Investigator as appropriate, will attend the Commission meeting at which the appointment will be made to discuss their recommendation. With permission of the Chief Public Defender, the Office Head may submit a written recommendation in lieu of appearing before the Commission.
- Upon the appointment of a Public Defender, Supervisory Assistant Public Defender, or Exempt Unit Head, the Chief or Deputy Chief Public Defender will notify the successful candidate and other in-house candidates who were not selected before the next work day.

In the event external candidates were interviewed and not selected, they should be notified the position has been filled as soon as possible.

- Any attorney, exempt and non entry-level bargaining unit position appointment will be communicated to the respective Office or Unit Head by the Chief or Deputy Chief Public Defender immediately following the Commission meeting when the appointment is made. It is the responsibility of the Office or Unit Head to contact the successful candidate as well as those in-house candidates who were not selected, prior to the next work day. As noted above, any external candidates not selected should also be notified the position has been filled as soon as possible. Office or Unit heads should not attempt to explain the Commission's appointments to unsuccessful applicants. They should simply be informed that the Commission appointed the person they determined the best qualified for the position.

Appointments to the positions of entry-level bargaining unit positions (e.g. PD Clerk, PD Secretary, Investigator I, Social Worker I, Paralegal I and Fiscal Administrative Assistant I), may be made by the Chief Public Defender, subject to subsequent ratification by the Commission. The Chief Public Defender will present information about the selected candidate at the respective Commission meeting.

- Once the Chief Public Defender or the Commission has acted in making the appointment or ratification, it is the responsibility of the Office or Unit Head as noted above, to contact the successful candidate and any in-house candidates prior to the next work day, if applicable in the circumstances. Notification procedures may also be coordinated with Human Resources to ensure timely notification to all applicants.

Subsequent to their appointment and prior to their start date, a Criminal Record Check will be completed on all external candidates.

### **Letters of Recommendation**

It is the policy of the Division of Public Defender Services that applicants for positions within the Division should not solicit or obtain, nor will the Commission consider, letters of recommendation from any employee of the Criminal Justice Commission.

This policy is based upon the inherent conflict of interest that exists when an applicant for a position within the Division obtains a recommendation from an individual with whom they may be working in an adversarial relationship and ethical questions could be raised under such circumstances.